

## **THE INTERNATIONALIZATION DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA UNDER THE PERSPECTIVE OF HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM**

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**Abstract:** This study applies historical institutionalism to analyze the development process of internationalization in Australian higher education, dividing it into four periods chronologically: the period limited to British higher education, the period of external education aid, the period oriented towards trade, and the period oriented towards internationalization. The deep structure influencing Australia's higher education internationalization includes "government-led, multi-stakeholder participation" in policy formulation, a "demand-driven" social environment, and an ideological influence guided by "educational objectives". Analyzing government policies identifies path dependence and key nodes in the development process of Australia's higher education internationalization. The interplay of interests among government, industry, and institutions serves as the driving mechanism in this process led by the government. Summarizing from Australia's strategies to promote higher education internationalization, this study extracts developmental experiences including meeting national development needs, placing students at the core, and ensuring the quality of international education.

**Keywords:** Historical Institutionalism, Internationalization of Higher Education, Internationalization of Higher Education Policy

### **Introduction**

Internationalization of higher education is an inevitable trend in the era of globalization, and it has become the common pursuit of higher education policies in many countries. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2019 and the post-epidemic era, human society has been undergoing profound changes unseen in a century. The global economic slowdown, the changes in the world political power pattern, and the confrontation between globalization and anti-globalization all have a negative impact on the internationalization of higher education. Therefore, under the circumstance that countries use more and more the internationalization of higher education to improve their soft power and establish their own national image, governments of all countries generally pay attention to the continuity and high-level

development of the internationalization of higher education.

As one of the earliest countries to conduct higher education international, Australia's higher education has strong international competitiveness, has not only made remarkable achievements, but also enjoys a good reputation for international education. The Australian government plays a leading role in the different stages of development of higher education. By adjusting the internationalization policy of higher education, it promotes the internationalization of higher education and attaches importance to the diversified integration of culture and global competitiveness. All sectors of Australian society have adopted a series of supporting measures to respond to the call of government policies and give full play to the benefits of the internationalization of higher education.

In 2021, the Australian Ministry of Education released the Australian International Education Strategy 2021-2030, which points out the sustainable development of the international higher education industry. Its core is to emphasize diversification, meet the technological needs of students and countries, be student-centered, and improve its global competitiveness. In the document, the minister of Education pointed out that the outbreak had had a huge impact on international education in Australia. Since the beginning of the 21st century, Australia has nurtured more than 3 million international students. These graduates have had a positive impact on politics, business and society across the globe, many of whom have become citizens making important contributions to Australia. In the process of reconstruction, the Australian Department of Education needs to take different approaches to create new growth opportunities and improve the experience of students at home and abroad. The promulgation of the Australian International Education Strategy 2021-2030 is an important strategy in the internationalization process of higher education in Australia. Together, the internationalization will shift from recovery to long-term growth and provide connected, creative and caring international education for all students studying in Australia.

### **Research Objectives**

(1) To analyze the historical evolution and key milestones of Australia's higher education internationalization, exploring the impact and driving forces of different policies and initiatives such as the Colombo Plan, overseas student policies, etc.

(2) To identify the policy-making process within Australia's higher education internationalization, examining its effects on education quality, student protection, and international reputation

(3) To investigate the institutional changes and driving mechanisms within Australia's higher education internationalization, analyzing the roles and interactions of government, educational institutions, and industry in the competitive international education market.

(4) To examine the impact of Australia's higher education internationalization on student cross-

cultural understanding and global employability readiness, researching the interaction and mutual benefits between international students and local Australian students in educational environments.

(5) To explore future trends and strategies for Australia's higher education internationalization, including innovations and quality assurance mechanisms to maintain competitiveness and attractiveness in the international education market.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Research on Internationalization of Higher Education***

Different scholars have different understandings of the internationalization of higher education. Van der wen der (1996) that internationalization refers to "any higher education (more) to adapt to the requirements and challenges related to social, economic and labor market globalization systematic and continuous efforts". Xue (1997) to higher education internationalization as a development trend or development process, and summarizes the activity method, ability method, spiritual temperament, process, the four-definition perspective or method. Altbach and Knight (2007) believe that one of the main purposes of the internationalization of higher education is directly related to the motivation of individuals, universities, governments, and other participants, and their motivation opportunities overlap. Individuals can participate in research and teaching activities in foreign universities to expand their knowledge and skills in the field of interest, and to understand the society, language, culture and economy of foreign countries. Xu and Jiang (2023) clarify the connotation of higher education internationalization from the perspective of theory and practice from the perspective of instrumentalism. On the theoretical level, for making the distinction between education internationalization and education globalization, education internationalization is included in education globalization, which is the only way of education globalization. In the practical level, education internationalization and education globalization are confusing, and it is difficult to distinguish between them. The internationalization of higher education has the characteristics of integrity, The Times and twists and turns. "Internationalization of higher education", as a concept and strategy, is driven by the dynamic combination of politics, economy, social culture, academic theories and stakeholders. As more and more countries and institutions in the world participate in the process of internationalization, the views on the internationalization of higher education are also constantly enriched.

Scholars have deepened their understanding of the internationalization of higher education, combined with the development process and current situation of the internationalization of higher education in different countries, and sought for useful experience from the process of the internationalization of higher education in the world. Wang, Wu & Wang (2023) used the theory of "triangle coordination" model to analyze the relationship between government and universities in the process of higher education internationalization in Malaysia. In the process of internationalization of

higher education in Malaysia, the market has experienced the evolution process of "state control" (initial stage) - "government limited power" (expansion period) - "state supervision" (deep expansion period), directly showing the relationship between government and universities in the process of internationalization of higher education in Malaysia.

Chen and Zhang (2022) compared the internationalization of higher education in China and the United States from three aspects: the internationalization degree of students, the internationalization level of teachers and the internationalization development of courses. Combined with the actual situation of China, analyze the outbreak era of China's higher education internationalization development by policy actively guide and leading, government, colleges and universities, folk live more widely involved in management, "going out" and "come in" and the development model, standards, quality, teachers and other comprehensive international talent training standards. Finally, it is proposed to participate in the quality of teachers, courses, campus internationalization, online platforms and internship programs and other ways, and establish the quality standard of international literacy. Jocelyne (2020) measured the national development of higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean by the indicators of international system and national policy, global university rankings, international office, location advantage, student mobility, and internationalization of curriculum and research. The internationalization of higher education in the region has made progress in recent years, particularly in terms of priorities on its institutional agenda. However, there are no consistent or effective efforts supporting the agencies. Therefore, the lack of national policy framework and support limits the progress of the internationalization of the region and hinders the modernization of higher education institutions in the region.

#### ***Research on Internationalization of Australian Higher Education***

The research on the internationalization of Australian higher education mainly focuses on its development course and enlightenment. With the support of national policies, Australia's higher education has gone international. Harman (2005) summarized the studies before 2005 and found that the themes of attention reflected the commitment of Australian higher education institutions and governments to the export of higher education services and the rapid growth in international student enrollment. The dramatic increase in student enrollment in Australia is supported by substantial research work, particularly on the social and educational characteristics of overseas students, their learning and research experiences, English language skills and development, and student support. Once full super, Wang & Lin (2009) according to the central policy and planning, financial support, information collection and release, the regulation of education quality, higher education market promotion, promote and agreement the government efforts in internationalization, reflect the Australian government in higher education internationalization development plays a positive role. Liu and Sun (2014) divided the internationalization of higher education in Australia into four stages. Before the 1950s, Australia's

higher education was introduced from the United Kingdom to a large extent, while Australian students also tended to study in the United Kingdom, North America and other countries. From the 1950s to the 1970s, Australia began to "cross the river by feeling for the stones" to find a suitable development path. The Australian government has promoted the internationalization of higher education by issuing scholarships and grants. At the end of 1980s, Australia's neoliberal economic thought had a huge impact on the internationalization of higher education, and on this basis formed the internationalization of higher education with the government and universities as the important main body. From the late 1990s to the present, the Australian government, educational institutions and universities have vigorously promoted the internationalization of higher education.

Peng and Gan (2022) from five aspects to describe the strategy of Australian higher education internationalization, policy make the international higher education strategy target, set up full-time international education institutions, including Australian qualifications, Australian university quality audit office (TEQSA), ESOS act of higher education internationalization quality assurance system, establish domestic cooperation, international cooperation, institutional cooperation, alumni participate in various international higher education partnership, accept international higher education assistance (especially project assistance). On this basis, combined with the practice of higher education internationalization in Australia, suggestions are put forward for the development of higher education internationalization in China from the three levels of policy, system and talent. The Australian government has integrated the resources of higher education in policy, and carried out various international consulting activities, established the international brands of Australian education through various ways, participated in the activities of international organizations, and provided international higher education assistance.

### ***Summary of Reviewed Literature***

The internationalization of higher education has attracted widespread attention from researchers both domestically and internationally, with the scope of research becoming increasingly broad and the outcomes increasingly rich. Researchers often focus on the phenomenon of internationalization of higher education itself, including its causes, implications, changes it brings, outcomes generated, and future development trends. They also study the paths and experiences of internationalization in higher education based on specific countries, strategies for promoting globalization in domestic or specific fields of higher education, and the impact of regional organizations on the internationalization of higher education. Through studying these issues, we can better understand foreign higher education systems and thus promote the internationalization process of higher education in our own country.

Research in China on the internationalization of Australian higher education is still in the stage of introducing its development process and summarizing experiences. This includes analyzing specific periods or studying the globalization of higher vocational education, often describing the current

situation without systematic and in-depth theoretical analysis. From existing studies on "Australian Higher Education Internationalization," it is evident that the Australian government plays a significant role in promoting the internationalization process. In the current post-pandemic era of global upheaval, the internationalization of Australian higher education has also been negatively impacted. The government enacted the "2021-2030 Australia's International Education Strategy" in 2021 to adjust policies and promote the development of internationalization in Australian higher education. Currently, there are no researchers who have incorporated this policy into the evolution of Australian higher education internationalization, despite its potential value in understanding successful experiences in internationalizing Australian higher education for other countries.

### **Methodology**

This study sorts out the change process of the internationalization policy of higher education in Australia from the perspective of historical institutionalism, and deeply analyzes the evolution logic of the internationalization in Australia, so as to summarize the experience of the internationalization of higher education in Australia. Under the perspective of historical institutionalism, the Australian higher education internationalization in chronological order, mainly divided into four stages: limited to the British higher education (before 1950), foreign education assistance (1951-1984), trade orientation (1985-1992) and internationalization development (since 1992). Then, it analyzes the evolution logic of the higher education internationalization in Australia from three aspects of structure logic, historical logic and dynamic mechanism.

At the level of structural logic, it focuses on the policy making of "government-led and multi-party participation", the "demand-driven" social environment and the ideology of "educational goal guidance". From the level of historical logic, the policies issued by the government are analyzed to find out the path dependence and key nodes in the development process of the internationalization of higher education in Australia. At the level of dynamic mechanism, the government, industry and institutions are all actors of relevant interests. In the process of the international development of Australian higher education, the interest game of multiple subjects dominated by the government is reflected. Finally, from the promotion strategy and internal logic of the internationalization of Australian higher education, summarize the development experience of the internationalization of Australian higher education, including meeting the needs of national development, putting students in the core position and ensuring the quality of international education.

### **Results**

#### ***1) Before 1950: Limited to the Stage of British Higher Education***

Australia became a colony of the United Kingdom from 1788 to 1900. In the early colonial

period, a large number of British immigrants with high academic qualifications and skills came to Australia, becoming the first intellectuals of Australia. The discovery of gold in 1851 attracted people from around the world to Australia. The Australian market began to thrive, with increasing immigration, infrastructure development, and the formation of its own cultural and social characteristics. The rapid development of mining and industry promoted the development of vocational education in Australia, leading to the establishment of many vocational education institutions. The first universities in Australia were established with the active advocacy and promotion of intellectuals. In 1850, the University of Sydney was established, marking the official start of higher education in Australia. The funding for the University of Sydney came from donations from various sectors of society, which was crucial for its development. In the latter half of the 19th century, the "one state, one university" model in Australia led to the establishment of universities such as the University of Melbourne, the University of Adelaide, the University of Tasmania, the University of Queensland, and the University of Western Australia. Graduates from these universities largely became Australia's leaders during the colonial period. Due to Australians mainly engaging in physical labor, higher education in Australia developed slowly. The development model of universities mostly directly imported the British university model and enjoyed a high degree of autonomy. While Australian universities imitated the British model, they also developed characteristics of "separation from the church." The management bodies of some universities were not religious, or they prohibited theological teachings in their courses. During the colonial period, only children of the upper social classes could study abroad, and the choice of study abroad countries was limited. Most students chose to study in the UK or the US. During this period, Australia's overseas education was not well developed, still in its preparatory stage for internationalization of higher education. Higher education was in a state of unilateral transplantation from Britain. Study abroad education was still in a simple and limited period, with uniform identities for international students, limited choices of study abroad countries, and a single mode of international exchange. The development of Australia and higher education laid a certain foundation for the internationalization of higher education.

## ***2) From 1951 to 1984: Stage of Foreign Educational Assistance***

After World War II, the Australian government made a series of adjustments in consideration of domestic and international conditions, marking Australia's first major shift towards international development. The objectives included maintaining good relations with neighboring countries, responding to independent developing nations, and enhancing international cultural exchange. The initial step was the "Colombo Plan," which focused on project assistance. The "Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific" was formulated at a diplomatic conference held in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), by the Commonwealth in 1951, officially launched on July 1st. Its purpose was to promote economic and social progress among the peoples of

South and Southeast Asia through regional governmental cooperation. When revised in 1977, it became known as the "Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific," reflecting its expanded membership and scope of activities. Early on, aid from developed countries to developing nations under the Colombo Plan included tangible capital and technology transfers, as well as significant components for skill development. The introduction of the Colombo Plan facilitated a surge in student exchanges, especially from the newly formed Commonwealth nations, reshaping the landscape of international educational exchanges as more students came to Australia than left for overseas studies. Since 1949, successive Australian governments have consistently emphasized welcoming overseas students and supporting international student programs, albeit with varying emphases. The policy of internationalizing higher education impacted Australia's diplomacy, trade, and expanded educational infrastructure for overseas students.

Subsequent developments saw several changes in the tuition fee system for higher education. In 1971, the government abolished tuition fees, greatly increasing its attractiveness to overseas students, particularly those from developing countries. This policy demonstrated Australia's assistance to other countries, although it also drew criticism. In 1979, the collection of overseas student fees replaced the previous assistance, known as Overseas Student Charges (OSC). These fees increased annually, exceeding half of the enrollment fees by 1988. Private fee-paying students were considered a component of Australia's aid program, contributing to government revenue. According to the "Overseas Student Fee Policy," one-third of training costs were borne by students themselves. This fee, termed "visa fee," was collected before overseas students obtained visas, constituting about ten percent of the entire school budget. Policy objectives were redefined to promote Australia's interests in countries deemed especially important (including ASEAN, Papua New Guinea, South Pacific, and the Middle East) by strengthening communication, understanding, and sympathy towards Australian policies, and facilitating cultural exchanges. By the mid-1980s, due to international and domestic circumstances, Australia was eager to establish good relations in the Asia-Pacific region. The Australian government provided substantial funding to developing countries, promoting the development of higher education and internationalizing it. Furthermore, Australia garnered a positive global image and reputation, elevating its international standing, as overseas students continued to flock to Australia for higher education. The increase in talent facilitated economic growth in Australia, accelerating the commercialization of higher education and laying the groundwork for its internationalization.

### ***3) From 1985 to 1992: Trade-oriented Phase***

Starting in 1985, higher education in Australia gradually underwent changes, shifting away from its predominantly aid-driven approach towards internationalization aimed at economic benefits, becoming a part of the nation's export industries. In 1984, the release of two substantive review reports marked the beginning of a transformation in Australia's higher education internationalization policy.



These reports, presented in contrasting views, featured the Jackson Report from the Overseas Aid Review Committee, advocating for higher education as an export industry, while the Goldring Report from the Private Overseas Students Policy Review Committee opposed market-based approaches to international student education. Ultimately, Jackson's viewpoint gained ascendancy.

In 1985, the Australian government introduced a policy for overseas students, under which privately funded students previously not covered by aid programs could enroll without restrictions, provided they met admission requirements and paid full tuition fees for their courses. Subsequently, an Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) policy was implemented to facilitate the recruitment of fee-paying students. A crucial aspect of these policies was that international students could only be accepted by schools after all places for Australian students were filled, thereby ensuring that Australian students were not displaced. The shift from the concept of educational aid to educational trade had begun: while education for private overseas students had been a component of Australia's aid program, the transition in 1985 from aid to trade ended implicit subsidies for private students subsidized from aid budgets. Australia's aid typically did not target these students, allowing educational aid objectives to be more effectively defined through scholarships in a fee-paying environment.

Entering the 1980s, Australian higher vocational education exhibited an internationalization trend to meet demands for workers and public aspirations. Conflicts arose between the Australian government and educators over the discrepancy in funding needs between colleges and average school funds. In 1987, a Higher Education Development Reform Commission was established on this basis to study Australia's dual-track system of higher education. Australia's 1988 "Higher Education: Policy Statement White Paper" indicated structural changes in Australian industries, shifting from traditional manufacturing and primary commodity exports towards high-value-added industries, triggering numerous social demands that required higher education to fulfill. At the national level, there was a call to strengthen collaboration between universities and enterprises, enhance the internationalization of science, technology, and continuing education, and expand overseas training to improve the quality and effectiveness of higher education.

#### ***4) From 1992 to Present: Phase of Internationalization Development***

Since the 1990s, higher education has become a major economic export industry for Australia. The Australian government highlighted in its 1992 publication "Australian International Education in the 1990s" that the significance of internationalizing higher education in Australia extends beyond its economic value, emphasizing the broader benefits it brings to the country and society through an internationally integrated education system. The Australian government places great importance on safeguarding the rights of international students while promoting the internationalization of higher education. In 2000, the "Education Services for Overseas Students Act" was passed, reflecting the government's clear requirements for the international education market and the rights of international

students, as well as the importance of establishing a protection mechanism. This measure had a significant positive effect on attracting foreign students to study in Australia, significantly enhancing Australia's international standing. However, with significant changes in international circumstances and turbulence in international education, the "Education Services for Overseas Students Act" gradually faced challenges. New issues emerged in the education market, where students' rights were not adequately protected, making it urgent to stabilize the international education market.

In 2005, the Australian Ministry of Education, Employment, and Youth Affairs issued the statement "Delivering World-Class International Education and Training" to promote the internationalization of Australian higher education, ensuring the quality of international education and stabilizing foreign education. The "Asian Century White Paper" in 2012 outlined 25 goals for Australia's future development, focusing on leveraging Asia's rise by 2025, forming a national blueprint based on domestic and international situations and the development of the Asian education market. Australia planned the "New Colombo Plan" in 2013, a landmark initiative by the government, which expected to inject funds to support Australian university students in their youth to study or intern in other countries and regions over the next five years.

The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted international education. Following the closure of Australia's borders, student enrollments in some regions plummeted by 70% compared to pre-pandemic levels. Communities and campuses across Australia strongly felt the absence of international students. However, with support from federal, state, and territorial governments, Australia's internationalization of higher education has consistently strived to maintain continuity in operations and teaching in unfamiliar circumstances. The government and various sectors of society have made enormous efforts to meet the diverse needs and expectations of both domestic and international students. In 2021, the Australian Department of Education released the "2021-2030 Australia's International Education Strategy," aimed at guiding the sustainable development of the international higher education industry. In April 2021, the Australian government announced targeted AUD 53.6 million assistance to help international education institutions most severely affected by COVID-19 infections. These measures encouraged educational institutions to refocus their business models on Australian students and expand the supply of online and offshore courses. Border reopening, prioritizing international students in the "National Plan to Transition Australia's National COVID-19 Response," and vaccine recognition are expected to drive industry recovery in 2022. To support educational institutions through the recovery period, the government extended fee waivers for regulatory costs to educational institutions from January 1, 2022, for up to 12 months, depending on their industry. A new Innovation Development Fund will provide short-term targeted support to educational institutions most affected by the closure of Australia's borders to diversify their educational products and enter online and offshore delivery. This new plan supplements and develops the fully subscribed Innovation Fund announced as part of the

comprehensive support plan in April 2021. This effort will be complemented by ongoing promotion to maintain Australia's market share and cultivate student awareness and preferences for the "Study in Australia" experience. Coordination among government, educational institutions, and industry is crucial to yield substantial returns for this critical sector. Australia has gained increasingly rich experience on the path of higher education internationalization, emphasizing international exchange and cooperation, integrating "bringing in" and "going global" strategies, showcasing Australia's educational principles and international perspectives to the world.

## **Discussion**

### *Factors play crucial roles in the process of internationalization of Australian higher education*

#### 1) Structural Logic: Macro-structural Analysis of the Internationalization of Australian Higher Education

In the process of internationalization of Australian higher education, policies, societal demands, educational objectives, and other factors play crucial roles. A series of policies issued by the government directly drive the internationalization of Australian higher education; changes in the social environment bring about variations in the effectiveness of policy implementation; and educational objectives guide the development of internationalization in higher education.

#### Policy Formulation: Government Leadership with Multi-stakeholder Participation

In the internationalization process of Australian higher education, the government has always played a leading role, yet the development of higher education has also been influenced by societal attention and participation. During the colonial period, Australian higher education initially developed by transplanting the British educational model. Funding for higher education was borne by state governments, supplemented by donations from societal awareness. Initial donations secured the level of higher education at the University of Sydney. After Australia gained independence, the government aimed to expand its influence in South Asia and Southeast Asia by providing foreign educational aid through project-based initiatives, exporting Australian vocational education to other countries. Simultaneously, the government continuously adjusted the fee system for international students, from initially free to charging "visa fees," with these funds used for university operations, ensuring the quality of higher education development and enhancing Australia's attractiveness in higher education. Criticism from societal figures during the evolution of fee policies also played a role in driving change. In the mid-1980s, based on the substantive review report by Jackson, Australia pursued economic benefits through the internationalization of higher education, rapidly developing international vocational education. Internationalization of higher education became an important export industry for Australia and a focus of national attention and support. The government issued a "White Paper," deepening the

connection between education and business, and promoting the development of continuing education and vocational technical education. Recently, Australia's latest international development strategy has received input from the government, educational institutions, industry, and society, better meeting the diverse development needs. The government's attitude towards the internationalization of higher education has become increasingly proactive.

#### Social Environment: Demand-Driven

Changes in the international and domestic social environments lead to reforms in national policies. Initially influenced by colonial history, Australia transplanted the British higher education system, yet developed its own characteristic of "de-theologization." In the 1950s, various countries demanded independence, prompting Australia to implement the "Colombo Plan" through project-based educational aid to South Asia and Southeast Asia. Through this initiative, Australia gained support from East Asian and Southeast Asian countries and enhanced its international status. In providing educational aid, Australia mainly focused on technical assistance tailored to the actual situations of recipient countries, promoting rapid development in infrastructure and industry in emerging nations. The government implemented various policies to safeguard the rights of international students, attracting them to study abroad and increasing the benefits brought about by educational internationalization, thereby steering higher education internationalization towards trade orientation. With the development of higher education internationalization and industrial upgrading, Australia's industrial layout underwent changes, shifting towards high-value-added directions. In 1988, the government issued the "Higher Education: Policy Statement White Paper," affirming higher education's ability to respond to social demands arising from industrial upgrading. This policy promoted reforms in higher education through market mechanisms, improving educational quality and driving the internationalization of higher education. In the 1990s, the upheaval in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union prompted the Australian government to reconsider the benefits of education at the national level, moving beyond mere economic interests. In 2000, the government enacted the "Overseas Student Education Services Act" to establish robust protection mechanisms for international students, attracting them to study in Australia. In the post-pandemic era, the Australian government has coordinated efforts among institutions, industries, and other stakeholders to promote the development of higher education internationalization by granting regulatory fee waivers to educational institutions and providing short-term, targeted support to facilitate the recovery and development of the education sector.

#### Understanding: Educational Objectives Guidance

The evolution of internationalization in Australian higher education must adapt to external environments such as politics, economics, and society, guided by educational objectives and its own developmental logic. The government's and society's views on internationalization in higher education directly influence decision-making and development goals. The development of internationalization in

Australian higher education, guided by educational internationalization goals, increasingly demonstrates targeted professional development. Initially aimed at enhancing Australia's international image politically, it shifted towards economic interests, and then towards cultural exchanges in ideological aspects. Upon gaining independence, Australia provided educational aid to neighboring and newly independent countries to foster alliances for South-South cooperation. Consequently, higher education internationalization primarily involved unilateral foreign aid and attracting international students to study in Australia. From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, internationalization in higher education became a significant export industry for Australia, bringing substantial economic benefits. The Australian government issued a "White Paper" to promote the link between higher education internationalization and business, emphasizing vocational and technical education exports.

The government's fee policies for education removed restrictions for overseas students to study in Australia as long as they met admission requirements and paid full course fees, thereby increasing the number of international students. Starting from the 1990s, dramatic changes in the international landscape made the government realize that pursuing only economic benefits through higher education internationalization was insufficient. Therefore, efforts were made to promote cultural exchanges and propagate Australian educational ideals and values. Policies protecting the rights of overseas students were introduced to attract them to study in Australia. In the post-pandemic era, the government has coordinated efforts among various stakeholders, including institutions and industries, to promote the development of higher education internationalization.

## 2) Historical Logic: Medium-term Institutional Analysis of Internationalization in Australian Higher Education

### Path Dependency in the Evolution of Internationalization in Australian Higher Education

When analyzing institutional change through historical institutionalism, path dependency serves as a significant paradigm. It examines how past institutions influence current ones from the perspective of institutional development. It illustrates the difficulty of institutional change through an analysis of the constraints on institutional transition, highlighting how path dependency promotes gradual institutional change. The Colombo Plan in the process of internationalization in Australian higher education embodies clear characteristics of institutional dependency. Since its formal launch in 1951, the Colombo Plan has undergone significant policy adjustments until 1977 and continues to be implemented today. Over the years, the Australian government has adhered to the concepts of human resource development and South-South cooperation in addressing economic and social development issues. The content of the Colombo Plan has evolved as member countries face complex and changing international situations. Training programs shifted from long-term aid to focusing on providing advanced skills and experience exchange, thereby better promoting the development of recipient countries. Current Colombo Plan initiatives involve public policy formulation in a globalized and

market economic environment, private sector development as a primary growth driver, and drug abuse prevention among member countries. Additionally, through another initiative, the Colombo Plan Staff College in Manila provides skill development opportunities for mid-level technical personnel. The Colombo Plan has always been based on the concept of self-help and mutual assistance in development processes, focusing on human resource development and South-South cooperation. Recognizing the need for material capital to provide leverage for growth, the Colombo Plan also emphasizes the need to enhance skill levels to more effectively absorb and utilize material capital. Historical institutionalism suggests that investments made in old systems incur high transformation costs, while learning effects, synergies, and adaptive expectations lead to increasing returns in old systems and create path dependency.

#### Key Nodes in the Evolution of Internationalization in Australian Higher Education

Although internationalization in Australian higher education generally exhibits a steady process of incremental development, this change is not aimed at achieving a static equilibrium but rather as a dynamic process that disrupts the existing equilibrium with changing environments to achieve new equilibrium states. Key nodes refer to the juncture points between the continuity and discontinuity periods of an institution, driven by internal factors of institutional qualitative change or external objective factors. These nodes break the bottleneck of the original institution and directly or indirectly promote the expansion of governmental institutions. The establishment of the University of Sydney marked the beginning of higher education in Australia and was the first key node of internationalization in Australian higher education. The introduction and formal implementation of the Colombo Plan in 1951 represented the second key node. The Colombo Plan shifted Australia's internationalization in higher education from a stage limited to British higher education to an era of foreign educational assistance, enhancing Australia's international influence through educational aid to newly independent countries. In 1985, the introduction of the "Overseas Student Policy" in Australia marked the third key node, signifying the shift from educational assistance to a trade-oriented phase in internationalization in Australian higher education. The policy allowed private international students, previously not included in funding schemes, to apply without restrictions if they met admission criteria and paid full tuition fees. Subsequently, export policies in the educational services industry were also implemented to encourage fee-paying students to enroll. In 1992, the release of "Australia's International Education in the 1990s" by the Australian government proposed that internationalization in Australian higher education not only brings economic benefits but also benefits the nation and society from the internationalization of higher education in Australia. Thus, internationalization in Australian higher education entered a stage of international development. Internationalization in Australian higher education continues to progress amidst ongoing transformations.

#### 3) Mechanisms of Action: Micro-level Actor Analysis of Internationalization in Australian

## Higher Education

The driving force behind historical institutionalism lies in asymmetrical power relations, driven by the interactions among various interest groups. Internationalization in Australian higher education is predominantly government-led, which determines the asymmetrical power dynamics within it. Prior to the 1980s, state governments primarily funded universities. However, from the 1980s onwards, as Australian government funding for higher education decreased, university enrollment rates continued to rise. Financial constraints became the primary factor hindering university development. Universities struggled to hire more teachers or host larger-scale lectures and academic discussions, thereby compromising teaching quality. Despite government efforts to promote university-industry collaboration and encourage universities to seek corporate funding, this situation did not improve significantly.

Enterprises play a pivotal role in driving the internationalization of vocational education within the process of internationalization in Australian higher education. University organizations also play a crucial role in this process. In 2012, the Australian government amended the "Overseas Student Education Services Act," creating a mutually beneficial situation for international students and the Australian government. This legislation introduced an online consultation system, enabling international students to seek assistance from educational institutions after signing agreements with the Australian government. It allowed students to choose again and receive pre-paid deposits to the Australian government, thereby ensuring the rights of international students.

In 2021, Australia enacted the "2021-2030 Australia International Education Strategy," a strategy developed through consultations led by members of the International Education Council, over 120 written submissions, and input from more than 1,600 stakeholders. Continuous cooperation between the government, the Ministry of Education, and other stakeholders contributing to international education will be essential for the successful implementation of this strategy. In the process of internationalization in Australian higher education, government, industry, and institutions are all stakeholders. Their interactions, driven by the government as the lead actor in a diverse set of interests, vividly outline the internal landscape of the mechanisms of change in internationalization in Australian higher education.

### ***The promotion strategy of higher education internationalization in Australia***

#### 1) To meet the needs of national development

The development of internationalization in Australian higher education is guided by government policies to meet international development needs. As Australia's workforce continues to evolve, the skill requirements for the development of international vocational education are also constantly changing. Skill development and lifelong learning will be key. International education is rapidly innovating to anticipate and respond to these changes. Currently, the proportion of Australian

international students in other important disciplines and technical fields (including engineering, mathematics, technology, and health) is far below the OECD average. A key challenge is how to motivate international students to study courses in skill-demand areas, which is also a concern being addressed by our international education competitors.

Aligning selected majors more effectively with key employment areas will channel more potential students into those specialized fields and regional job markets. Diversifying qualification levels and concentration of studies will also encourage students to study a range of institutional subjects beyond traditional management, business, and IT courses. Targeted vocational initiatives can also help incentivize interested temporary graduate visa holders to enroll in skill-demand courses, both domestically and internationally. Australia's Service Export Action Plan emphasizes that Australia's international competitiveness depends on the skills and qualifications of its workforce. International education can help bridge these gaps.

Micro-credentials and short-term courses will become increasingly relevant in the future, providing opportunities for the government to collaborate in new markets and promptly meet students' evolving skill needs. Students unable to commit to longer courses may be interested in receiving quality Australian education in priority areas. Through these measures, the process of internationalization in Australian higher education development aims to meet the country's demand for skilled talent.

## 2) Put the students at the core position

Australia, as a highly favored destination for international students, its global reputation depends on whether Australia can provide world-class learning experiences for domestic and international students regardless of their location or mode of study. Through the internationalization of higher education, Australia establishes strong interpersonal connections, enhances its influence in the region, and strengthens its ties with the world. Outbound experiences of Australian students contribute to preparing them for a globalized and interconnected future. When international students study alongside Australian students, both groups benefit. The presence of diverse cultures and perspectives in classrooms and campuses improves the learning experience for both Australian and international students. This helps Australian students develop cross-cultural understanding, preparing them for entry into the global labor market.

Creating a sense of belonging during their study in Australia is fundamental to student well-being. Connecting students with local community groups and each other improves cross-cultural exchanges, making educational providers supporters of social cohesion. Rich extracurricular experiences such as internships, employer networks, and graduation opportunities are crucial elements of the international student experience. Identifying and providing extracurricular opportunities that help international students fully utilize their Australian education will provide them with a more comprehensive experience and support connections among peers. The Australian government will



continue to collaborate with industries to support international students in building meaningful connections with domestic students and beyond their communities.

### 3) Ensure the quality of international education

To ensure the future competitiveness of Australia's international higher education, the legislative and policy framework supporting international education must promote diversity and growth. Firstly, there needs to be a targeted review of the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (referred to as "the Act") to examine how the management system for international student education services supports the implementation of this strategy and continually upholds Australia's reputation in high-quality education. Additionally, establishing a set of global standards and continuously improving Australia's teaching and research systems through promotion and accreditation are essential. The government must maintain a robust quality framework to ensure rigorous quality assurance and regulation across all levels of education in Australia. The Act and related legislation specifically focus on protecting and enhancing Australia's reputation in quality education by providing fee protection and supporting the integrity of student visa programs. The Act sets standards and criteria for registered education and training institutions offering courses to student visa holders under the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS). The legislative framework of the Act also establishes a tuition protection service for international students studying CRICOS registered courses. The international education sector can innovate autonomously based on high-quality data aimed at different opportunity areas. With accurate data, the industry will have an evidence base to meet student needs and identify opportunities for expansion and diversification. Strengthening data collection aligned with expansion into new markets, products, and delivery will enable both the sector and the government to assess progress effectively.

## Conclusions

1) The development of Australia's higher education internationalization has gone through multiple stages and key milestones, from the early Colombo Plan to recent legislative and policy framework adjustments. Throughout this process, the Australian government has not only promoted international education but also emphasized maintaining educational quality and global reputation. Legal regulations such as the 2000 Overseas Student Education Services Act have played a crucial role in ensuring fee protection and course quality oversight, providing safety and security for students.

2) Australia's higher education internationalization aims not only for economic benefits but also to foster globalization and cross-cultural understanding. International and local students studying in the same educational environment engage in mutual exchange and interaction, promoting cultural understanding and social integration. This diversity and exchange prepare Australian students to meet the challenges of the global labor market.

3) Looking forward, to maintain Australia's competitiveness in higher education internationally, the government needs to continuously optimize the education and research systems and develop more flexible and adaptive policy measures. Specifically, there is a need to strengthen data-driven decision-making so that the industry can respond quickly to market demands and opportunities, providing students with richer and more personalized learning experiences.

4) In conclusion, the success of Australia's higher education internationalization depends on the collaborative efforts of government, educational institutions, industry, and students. Through ongoing cooperation and innovation, Australia will be able to maintain its leading position on the international education stage, offering world-class educational opportunities to students worldwide.

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